

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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SUBJECT: MIN GOVT PRESS CONFERENCE PROMISES EVENTUAL RETURN TO
CONSTITUTIONAL RULE

1. WE WERE BEGINNING TO WORRY. THE RODRIGUEZ LARA GOVERN-
MENT HAD GONE MORE THAN THREE WEEKS WITHOUT ITS CUSTOMARY
PLEDGE TO EVENTUALLY RETURN THE COUNTRY TO CIVILIAN
CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT. BUT FINALLY AN "AUTHORITATIVE
SOURCE" HAS SPOKEN UP, NONE LESS THAN NEW MINISTER OF
GOVERNMENT GEN. RUBEN DARIO AYALA, WHOSE SUPPORT FOR
RODRIGUEZ LARA DURING LABOR DAY'S ABORTIVE COUP ATTEMPT
WAS QUALIFIED BY THE STATEMENT THAT "MISTAKES HAVE BEEN
MADE (BY THE RODRIGUEZ LARA GOVERNMENT) WHICH WILL HAVE
TO BE CORRECTED."

2. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE ON SEPT. 15 IN MACHALA, WHERE
HE HAD BEEN MILITARY GOVERNOR AND 1ST BRIGADE COMMANDER
BEFORE THE UPRISING, AYALA SAID "A RETURN (TO CIVIL
RULE) HAS TO BE PRODUCED, AS IS INEVITABLE, BECAUSE THE
ARMED FORCES ARE NOT GOING TO BE IN POWER FOREVER. THE
WORK OF THE GOVERNMENT," HE WENT ON, "IS ABSOLUTELY
HONEST AND IMPARTIAL, WITH A GOAL OF RE-ESTABLISHING A
SOCIAL AND JUDICIAL STRUCTURE IN THE COUNTRY WHICH WILL BE
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ACCEPTABLE TO ALL ECUADOREANS."

3. ASKED ABOUT HIS SELECTION AS MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT, AYALA SAID "IT WAS A DECISION TAKEN BY THE PRESIDENT, WITHOUT ANY FORM OF PRESSURE, DIRECT OR INDIRECT," PRESUMABLY REFERRING TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE CHOICE WAS EITHER A TRADE-OFF FOR AYALA'S SUPPORT DURING THE COUP, OR A RESPONSE TO THE WIDELY-NOTED CONDITIONAL NATURE OF THAT SUPPORT (CONDITIONED UPON "CHANGES" TO BE MADE BY THE REGIME).

4. AYALA WAS ASKED WHAT WOULD BE DONE WITH THE MILITARY OFFICERS WHO WERE IMPLICATED (OR CAUGHT) IN THE COUP ATTEMPT. HE DESCRIBED THE COUP EFFORT AS "A SUMMER TEMPEST," CALLED UPON THE CITIZENRY NOT TO BE OVERLY DISTURBED BY IT, AND DESCRIBED THE PLOTTERS AS PEOPLE "WHO FEEL THEY HAVE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY, TO SATISFY THEIR VANITY." HE DID NOT REALLY ANSWER THE QUESTION, BUT RATHER MADE AN APPEAL TO MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES TO MAINTAIN THEIR SPIRIT AND THEIR UNITY.

5. QUESTIONED ABOUT THE DETENTION OF POLITICAL PARTY LEADER ASAAD BUCARAM AND THE POSSIBLE RETURN OF EX-PRESIDENT VELASCO IBARRA, AYALA SAID THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT PERMIT MERE VULGAR, UNSUBSTANTIATED ATTACKS AGAINST IT, BUT THAT THE MATTER (BUCARAM) WOULD BE DEALT WITH BY THE POLICE (BUCARAM, ALMOST AS AYALA WAS SPEAKING, WAS RELEASED BY THE POLICE AFTER HAVING BEEN SENTENCED TO FOUR DAYS IN JAIL AND A 150 SUCRE -- FIVE DOLLARS -- FINE). AYALA DID, HOWEVER, NOT THAT IN A SMALL COUNTRY LIKE THIS, ECUADOREANS HAVE TO THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT WHETHER 12 OR 14 DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES REALLY SERVE THEIR BEST INTERESTS. "THESE PARTIES DO NOTHING BUT PLAY GAMES WHICH SERVE CERTAIN POLITICAL AND PERSONAL INTERESTS. TO ME, POLITICAL PARTIES OUGHT TO SERVE THE VITAL ASPIRATIONS OF THE ECUADOREAN PUBLIC." AND ON VELASCO IBARRA, HIS RETURN "IS NOT, FOR ME, A PROBLEM. HE HAS ALWAYS ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD RETURN. THIS (LAST ANNOUNCEMENT FROM BUENOS AIRES) IS HIS EIGHTH. I THINK THAT ANSWERS THE QUESTION."

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6. COMMENT: AYALA'S ANSWERS TO THE PRESS QUESTIONS, SEEMED FROM NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS, MATTER-OF-FACT AND NON-CONTENTIOUS. HE REAFFIRMED THE PARTY LINE -- THAT IS THAT THE ARMED FORCES WILL IN DUE COURSE TURN POWER BACK TO CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES -- WITHOUT SETTING A TIME-TABLE FOR SAME. AYALA'S ANSWERS, HOWEVER LACKED THE HARSHNESS THAT HIS PREDECESSOR (GEN. DU JAN, NOW ARMY COMMANDER) OFTEN USED

("POLITICS IS NOTHING BUT THE BURLESQUE OF GREEDY POLITICIANS ENRICHENING THEMSELVES AT THE PUBLIC EXPENSE"). NOTHING IN HIS ANSWERS, AS THEY APPEARED IN THE PRESS, SEEMED TO VEIL THREATS OR WITHHOLD SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT. PLUS, AS IS USUAL IN ECUADOR, ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS (WHICH OFTEN ARE BUT LIP-SERVICE TO THE NECESSARY "NATIONALIST REVOLUTIONARY" RHETORIC): AT THE MOMENT THAT AAALA WAS SAYING THAT NEITHER THE GOE, NOR LEAST OF ALL HE AS MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT, COULD PERMIT "VULGAR ATTACKS" ON THE GOVERNMENT (BY BUCARAM), THE GOE WAS RELEASING BUCARAM.
BREWSTER

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